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C O N F I D E N T I A L MANILA 000645

SIPDIS

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TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [RP](#)

SUBJECT: PHILIPPINE FOREIGN SECRETARY UNDERSCORES ARROYO'S  
INTEREST IN MEETING PRESIDENT OBAMA

Classified By: Ambassador Kristie A. Kenney, Reasons 1.4 (b) and (d)

11. (C) SUMMARY: In a free-ranging luncheon conversation today with the Ambassador that touched on a number of subjects (septel), Philippine Foreign Secretary Alberto Romulo reiterated Philippine President Gloria Macapagal Arroyo's continued strong interest in a personal meeting with President Obama in Washington. Romulo commented on the cordial and productive March 13 phone conversation between the two presidents, which highlighted a number of key areas of bilateral cooperation, including global climate change and counterterrorism efforts. In Post's view, such a meeting would likely prove productive in moving ahead cooperation on these and other issues, while further cementing ties with a key regional ally. END SUMMARY.

12. (C) During the luncheon meeting with the Ambassador, convened at Secretary Romulo's request, the two discussed a diverse array of bilateral issues (septel). However, it was clear from the outset that Romulo's overriding interest was in reemphasizing President Arroyo's high interest in a face-to-face Oval Office meeting with President Obama.

13. (C) Romulo commented at some length on the warm and productive discussion that ensued when President Obama phoned President Arroyo March 13. Along with its emphasis on traditional areas of U.S.-Philippine cooperation such as counterterrorism, the phone conversation broached areas where new opportunities may exist for greater engagement, including global climate change and renewable energy.

COMMENT

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14. (C) Post understands the many competing demands on the President's time, but nonetheless feels that a short face-to-face meeting would prove productive in moving forward on a variety of issues, including continued progress on human rights and the early resumption of the Philippine government's peace negotiations with Muslim insurgents. Largely as a result of its half-century as a U.S. territory and commonwealth, special ties exist between our two nations, and more than four million Americans have Philippine family ties. A meeting between the two presidents would reaffirm this special partnership. Lastly, in light of expanded U.S. engagement with ASEAN, we must encourage the Philippines to maintain the proactive stance it has taken in pressing the cause of democracy and human rights in Burma and elsewhere in the region.

KENNEY